



Beware the

Ides of March



So said a soothsayer to Julius Caesar, as immortalised in the play by William Shakespeare—and as I look at our political world, with all its figurative 'back-stabbing', and wonder what to talk about this month, that little saying springs to mind. But what are the Ides, and why beware?

One day like any other

The Ides is just the Roman name in their calendar for the 15th of March. There wasn't anything particularly good or bad about it—it wasn't anything like 'Friday the 13th'. At least, not when Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC. According to Plutarch, a seer had warned that harm would come to Caesar no later than the Ides of March. On his way to the Theatre of Pompey, Caesar passed the seer and joked, "The Ides of March are come", implying that the prophecy had not been fulfilled, to which the seer replied "Aye, Caesar; but not gone." Sure enough, he was stabbed to death at the meeting of the senate that day in a conspiracy in which as many as 60 were involved, led by Brutus and Cassius.

Beware the Ides—a message for today?

Frankly, No! We don't need to be superstitious

about any day. But on the other hand, perhaps we do need to consider some of the things Julius Caesar missed, like treating other people (even opponents) graciously, and not being too self confident or self absorbed. I'm reminded of one of Jesus' parables in which he tells of a farmer who enjoyed a bumper crop, and as he congratulated himself and planned to replace his barns with bigger ones and to enjoy luxurious living, he missed God's word to him: "You fool! This night your soul will be required of you".

Afraid of dying?

I don't think God often gives us specific warning of our death, though we can of course hear warnings in all sorts of circumstances. A close miss with a drink-driving accident; an overweight friend developing diabetes or a smoker getting cancer—all these remind us of our own risk, and that sometimes we contribute to our own death. But many people suffer these same experiences even without contributing, and you never know when it will happen. My question is, are you ready to die? I am, and have nothing to fear—but only because of Jesus.



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